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CIS

CSCE DIGEST

MARCH 15, 1988

Perestroika and Eastern Europe

On March 15 the Commission heard testimony from a very distinguished group of individuals on the foreign policy implications of perestroika. The Commission examined East and Central European responsiveness to Soviet reforms and the implications for United States and Soviet foreign policy.

The panel of witnesses included Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Dr. Charles Gati, Dr. Karen Dawisha, Dr. Alexander Smolar, and Dr. Milan Svec.

Herewith are excerpts from the hearing:

Kirkpatrick:

"I believe that Gorbachev's plans for reform are sweeping and that his hopes for internal economic reform will lead, if fulfilled, to a more economically productive and modernized Soviet society. I believe that his understanding of modernization includes a desire for greater participation by Soviet people in society. And I believe this model of a Socialist society that is based on broader participation in productive processes particularly, and decisions concerning productive processes, guides his conception, not only of what relationships among citizens and the state in the Soviet Union should be, but also his model of what relationships between the citizen and states should be in Eastern Europe, and also between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

"I think in fact that Gorbachev is the manner of man who, for his own reasons, would like, in fact, to dismantle the structure of oppression that held in prison just such men and women as Sakharov, Bonner, Sharansky and Orlov. Now, do I think that this means that he is prepared to dismantle the structure of totalitarianism and repression in the Soviet Union, or abandon the use of force in Soviet relations with Eastern Europe? My answer to that is we simply do not yet know. What we do know is that he has made steps, and significant steps, toward the release of political prisoners and dissidents in the Soviet Union. And I think it is personally – profoundly mistaken to minimize this movement, or to understate its importance for the Soviet Union, or the Soviet people. We simply don't know the answers to those questions and I think it is very important that we face not only the limits of our knowledge, the limits of current developments and also, probably, the limits of Mikhail Gorbachev's powers."

ON GORBACHEV AND EASTERN EUROPE

Dawisha:

"From the inception of the Gorbachev period, there was every reason to believe that Eastern Europe would occupy a central place on the Soviet policy agenda. Gorbachev reaffirmed during such occasions as the renewal of the Warsaw Treaty in April 1985 and the 27th Party Congress in March 1986 that the Soviet and East European peoples still share a 'common historical destiny,' emphasizing in the process the fact that he, like his predecessors, considers core Soviet strategic, ideological, and economic interests to be invested in Eastern Europe. His admission of Soviet culpability for mismanaging relations in the past and for failing, for example, to 'avert crisis situations,' underlined only his commitment to reappraise certain important aspects of the relationship, without suggesting for a moment that Moscow was considering allowing a situation to develop which would lead to the denunication or overthrow of socialism in Eastern Europe or the demise of the Soviet alliance system there. While admitting that the development of the Socialist bloc has encountered a large number of problems, Gorbachev himself clearly sees the existence of the bloc as a major force in international politics.

"Gorbachev has already had a significant impact on Soviet-East European relations. East European officials, dissidents and public opinion are universal in agreeing both that Gorbachev represents a major force for change in the region and that this force has already been unleashed, albeit with differing results."

Kirkpatrick:

"There is force of two kinds used at two levels really. We have the people of East European countries governed by force, by their own government, and maintained in a relationship with the Soviet Union by force.

"The presence of significant numbers of Soviet troops in the Warsaw Pact countries is, of course, the guarantor and the symbol of the relationship and of the Soviet inclination to use force to maintain that relationship.

(Continued on p. 4)

NOTICE

The quotes contained herein were taken from the transcript of the Commission hearing on March 15, 1988. They have been abridged by the Commission staff for purposes of clarity in this publication.

Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick testifying before the Helsinki Commission.
Photo by Fritz Myer

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Gati:

"The general pattern, if there is one in Eastern Europe today, is to pay lip service to Gorbachev, to *perestroika*, to *glasnost*, but to keep the lid on change, not because the East European leaders are not interested in some of the changes that Gorbachev is attempting, but because they are very deeply concerned, and indeed afraid of the destabilizing effect of the changes.

"The Gorbachev phenomenon, together with the others, is contributing to growing instability in that country. There may, or may not be today a real crisis in Hungary, but there is most certainly a most widespread perception of a crisis. . . .

"In terms of both *perestroika* and *glasnost*, . . . Hungary is years ahead of the Soviet Union. Much of what Gorbachev is thinking about has already been implemented in that country . . . the problem is what Hungary should now be doing. Its next steps would entail truly radical measures . . . i.e., Hungary should reduce its trade relations with members of the Soviet bloc and increase its Western exposure. Secondly, for the sake of political stability, Hungary should move toward political pluralism and adopt a two-party system, even if—and I would like to emphasize—if both parties would accept the country's Socialist orientation and uphold its association with the Warsaw Pact. The issue is not only that these next steps, what the Hungarians refer to as 'The reform of the reform', are presently unacceptable, both to the Soviet Union and to the Hungarian leadership. That is true, of course, but the more important issue is that it is the Gorbachev phenomenon that has encouraged a growing number of Hungarians, including members of the political elite, to think about such unacceptable next steps. In a very real sense, then, Gorbachev has had a destabilizing impact on Hungary."

Svec:

"In its essence, the plan of Czechoslovakia reforms—not unlike Gorbachev's—tries to preserve as much power and prerogatives of the center as possible, while the management of enterprises and the people bear the heat of the planned belt-tightening. Why the managers and the people would accept the consequences of full accountability for the past decisions of the center and its future meddling in the economy is not explained, although it is a crucial question. Effective reforms in Czechoslovakia, like in any other country, will mean—at least initially—harder work and less economic security for most of the people. Because the present leadership cannot escape direct responsibility for the developing crises in Czechoslovakia, it is ill-positioned to impose such sacrifices on the people.

"Dogmatists and anti-reformers in Czechoslovakia suspect that any effective reforms would soon lead to a rapid weakening of the influence of the Communist Party in the economy, to a growing pluralism of interests in the society, and to the preference given to capable professionals instead of uneducated dogmatists. The latter will fight the reforms. Communist reformers know, on the other hand, that an unreformed Czechoslovakia—and the rest of Eastern Europe—will sooner or later reach a stage where the depth of its crises and its distance from the West will make it virtually impossible for the Communists to claim their legitimacy of power or the right to initiate reforms at such a late point. One can briefly conclude that, at the present time, the withering away of the old system of government is already in progress in Czechoslovakia, while a better system will not be available for some time to come."

Smolar:

". . . with Gorbachev's coming to power we have the first Soviet leader who fully accepted Jaruzelski's political line. Jaruzelski manifested his favorable attitude to the new Soviet line from the very inception of Gorbachev's rule. The result is a new, privileged relationship with the Kremlin. . . .

"The relationship between Gorbachev's new policy and Jaruzelski's policy cannot, however, be reduced to the problem of a greater freedom for policymaking in Warsaw. The new Soviet dynamics actually forces the Polish rulers to look for new solutions to old problems. They can no longer use Moscow as an alibi, pretending that the only obstacle for more liberal, more democratic rule is in Moscow. They cannot even pretend that the lack of will to establish a dialogue with 'Solidarity', symbolized most of all by Lech Walesa, is due to Kremlin opposition when Gorbachev himself calls Andrei Sakharov, and talks to him publicly.

". . . what is important here when we discuss the impact of Soviet *glasnost* and *perestroika* is not only the achieved level of 'decompression', 'liberalization', 'democratization', of 'openness', of tolerated pluralism, but the dynamics of change. The Soviet changes—independently from what we think about their prospects—create hopes and expectations of greater freedom and well-being. But this new policy coming from the East also destabilizes Polish ruling groups; it makes them more sensitive to internal pressures, to the needs expressed by the people, to the demands voiced by the opposition, and by the church, etc.

". . . certain changes visible in Poland since autumn 1986 are the effect, direct and indirect, of Soviet *perestroika*. Such as a tacit acknowledgement, without legalization, of course, of the durable character of the opposition in the Polish political landscape.

"We have seen a regime of 'tolerant repressiveness', with thousands of well-known leaders of 'Solidarity' and of other opposition factions acting openly, trying to organize new forms of pressure, discussing problems of opposition strategy, tactics and attitudes towards Jaruzelski's new policy . . . but at present—for already more than two years—the conditions for the opposition are better than in any other moment in the post-Stalinist period with exception of 'Solidarity's' legal existence in 1980-81."

ON THE POLISH PRESS

". . . the official press has become much more open in discussing social, economic and even certain political problems facing Poland. Much more reliable information and more objective analysis is apparent . . . reason for these changes . . . After the experience of 1980-81, a return to ideological rhetoric was impossible, especially since Poles have several sources of independent information, including Western radio stations . . . very rich network of underground press . . . and dozens of legal Catholic publications. One particular area in the informational domain where positive results of Gorbachev's policy can be seen concerns the so-called blank spots in history; that is, those taboo subjects concerning difficulties of past Polish-Soviet relations. Subjects such as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, and the massacre of Polish officers by the Soviet army in Katyn can now be discussed."

REGARDING THE ECONOMIC REFORMS

"It is an internally contradictory program, and these contradictions—when added to previous experiences, the depth of present economic disequilibria in internal and external markets, and society's lack of trust—do not encourage much optimism about results of the new reform. Jaruzelski was eager to promote new forms of cooperation with the Soviet Union and consequently created new forms of dependency."

East European and Soviet specialists fielding questions from Helsinki Commission. (From left to right – Milan Svec, Charles Gati, Karen Dawisha, and Alexander Smolar)
Photo by Fritz Myer

ON U.S. LEVERAGE

Kirkpatrick:

"I don't believe we can control the Soviet behavior by our policies. I think the history of the Soviet Union demonstrates . . . that the Soviet behavior is finally determined by their priorities and their decisions. And that our impact on that is only very marginal. I think our behavior, vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and our policies ought to express our values and our priorities and our goals, and be designed for our purposes, not simply out of an effort to influence them.

"I do believe that there are some significant changes now taking place in the Soviet Union . . . but I don't think it is brought about by our policies really. I think it is brought about by Gorbachev's analysis of the world and his conviction that the policies in force today are counterproductive in the pursuit of their goals. I believe that the Soviets are still very much interested in expansion. But I think that Gorbachev is interested in expansion now by political means, by an effort to expand political influence . . . that he thinks force as used in Afghanistan or to hold East European countries may be counterproductive.

"I think for both internal and external reasons, Gorbachev has concluded that the level of repression of human rights, including the minorities in the Soviet Union, and the reliance on force is undesirable. And he would like to achieve goals, I think, with less reliance on force. What we don't know is how far he is willing to go. I believe Gorbachev is interested in reducing the image of the Soviet threat, and that arms reductions are attractive to him as part of this. And that some relaxation internally in the Soviet Union, and in relations with Eastern Europe are part of this. I think that these are Gorbachev's trademarks, if you will, hallmarks of the Gorbachev regime."

LINKING HUMAN RIGHTS TO TRADE

Gati:

"Certainly one of the key considerations in our listing of priorities has to be human rights. But if there is any one problem in this area, it has to do with our relations with Western Europe. If we go too far in making human rights as the primary criterion for trade, I believe that we will very seriously damage our relations with West Germany, in particular, but other West European countries as well. You have to balance the interests, and recognize trade-offs. The only truly important and influential Western country in Eastern Europe is West Germany. To pursue a policy that is so completely contrary to West Germany is futile. We will accomplish very little.

"And, finally, the last point is that the key to our successful policy in Eastern Europe is to establish some measure of consensus within NATO on the place and role of human rights in our policy."

ON JACKSON-VANIK

Dawisha:

"I think it has been a disaster, both in achieving its specific initial intentions, and as a guidepost for any future relationship between this country, much less the West as a whole, and Eastern Europe. Jackson-Vanik reduced human rights in the Eastern bloc to a question of lists. They can always produce a body for us, in return for nominal improvements in relations. This should not be the purpose of our relationship.

"However, of course, we have to – as a country and as a member of the group of countries which has as its core basic moral principles – we have to pursue and we should be pursuing policies towards these countries which have at their bases concern and deep concern for the populations of these countries, not just the rights of a section of the population of these countries to leave, but also what the widest improvement in the quality of life for all of those who choose to stay behind. This is why the CSCE process, to my way of thinking, is infinitely more important than the Jackson-Vanik process.

"Trade and human rights, of course they are linked. But they are linked not through a specific law, like Jackson-Vanik, or a sense-of-Congress resolution, but through an entire process which has the moral weight of all Western nations behind it. That's why CSCE is important.

"It is very interesting and instructive to note that the clash between the Hungarians and the Romanians over the treatment of ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania has now come on to the floor of CSCE in Vienna. It is the first time that we have the CSCE process being used by East Europeans themselves to vent disagreements amongst them. This shows you more than anything, I think, that CSCE has come of age, and that it has served a really vital role in providing these East European countries with a forum, internationally, to vent issues of concern about Europe."

ON CONVENTIONAL FORCE REDUCTIONS

Dawisha:

". . . The West can encourage the emergence of verification regimes within the CSCE process and in particular, within the follow-on talks, and conventional force pool-downs which would address the pre-eminence of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe and move to reduce them. Such an action would have more impact in the political realm than I think anything that we have seen in the last 40 years of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. . . . When we move toward conventional arms reductions we should consider that NATO security is our first priority, but that security can be enhanced by withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe, thereby fulfilling the dual mission of our policy, security and the moral mission to reduce Soviet influence in Eastern Europe."

Kirkpatrick:

". . . top priority of the United States should be to negotiate real reductions. I would like to see 50-percent reductions in conventional forces, or 75-percent reductions in conventional forces in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and Western Europe.

"And I think that any such real reductions in conventional forces have the potential for transforming the relationships within the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe on the one hand, and East and West on the other."

Kirkpatrick—Cont. from p. 1

"I believe that the basic question involved in the Soviet's relationship to the countries of Eastern Europe, is the basic relationship involved in the Soviet Union's relations to almost all countries and to their own citizens, is whether they are prepared to develop relationships independently of the use of force. What makes Afghanistan important, not only for the Afghan people for whom it is tragic, but also for the rest of the world, is its clear meaning—it is a symbol of the use of force to relate to other nations, to subjugate other nations.

"Gorbachev has already presented to the world as existing today a model of relationships among the nations of the Warsaw power which resembles that among the nations of the NATO Alliance, namely an alliance of independent nations. So far, of course, the nations of Eastern Europe are not independent and have not been free to choose whether or not to continue in a relationship and military alliance with the Soviet Union. I do not really expect rapid movement toward such an end, but I think it is possible."

GORBACHEV AND EUROPE

Dawisha:

"The goals of economic autarky and social isolationism are as alien to Gorbachev's reform plans as they were to the Westernizers who dominated the Russian court under Peter the Great. Gorbachev's conception relies on greater economic, political, and social interaction amongst the Socialist and Capitalist states of Europe, with the aim of reducing both American hegemony and the rigid division of Europe. To many in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev appeared sincere when he labeled Europe a 'common home' and declared that 'Europe's historic chance and its future lies in peaceful cooperation between the states of that continent.' In addition to the general concepts which lay behind this notion, Gorbachev also had specifically reconceptualized the entire notion of European security, bringing it more into line with the ideals embodied in the Helsinki Final Act. At the center of this new view of European security was an acceptance of detente, disarmament and peaceful coexistence within Europe as objectives separate from U.S.-Soviet relations. This formulation represented a victory for those East European leaders who had persistently argued since the early 1980s that European detente had to be protected from the deterioration in U.S.-Soviet relations."

Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick
former United States Ambassador to the United Nations and presently a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Dr. Karen Dawisha
professor in the Department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, previously served as Specialist Advisor on Soviet policy to the British House of Commons.

Dr. Charles Gati
professor of political science at Union College in New York, currently serves as chairman and coordinator of the U.S. delegation to the U.S.-Soviet roundtable on "the role of Eastern Europe in the relaxation of tensions between the U.S. and U.S.S.R."

Dr. Alexander Smolar
editor of the Polish affairs journal, ANEKS, and recently served as a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Dr. Milan Svec
served as Charge d'Affairs and Minister Counselor at the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington from 1982–85 and presently is a research fellow at Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University.

GPO: 1988 83-728 (49)

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